



The Balsams Grand Resort Hotel is nestled on 15,000 private acres near the Canadian border.

New Hampshire's WINTER PLAYGROUND

THE SNOW BEGINS AS a thin dusting as you drive north into the tip of New Hampshire. By the time you near The Balsams Grand Resort Hotel, located just 15 miles southeast of the Canadian border in Dixville Notch, the snow is circling the towers and turrets of the grand hotel.

Since 1866, visitors have been coming to The Balsams for the quiet, the food, the chance to curl up with a book on comfy couches among crackling

There's no better place to be snowed in than at The Balsams.

fires. But for those looking forward to being outside all day—like a child on a snow day—The Balsams is a winter playground.

Trek through undisturbed whiteness during a snowshoeing expedition. As you walk through dense stands of yellow birch, spruce, moosewood, and balsam, the quiet hushes any worldly concerns. By the end of the trip, even the most inexperienced snowshoers will have made their own trails, feeling like experts.

Strike out on your own or join a group for your next activity. The Balsams offers 95 kilometers of cross-country skiing trails that navigate the 15,000-acre private estate. Have a taste, instead, for Alpine skiing? The only sounds heard on the resort's 16 trails are the whistling of the wind and your own muffled breathing as you fly down one of the least crowded mountains in New England. Try the Connecticut or Monadnock Trails for an easier route through the woods, or take the Abeniki or Mohawk black-diamond shoots, which head down the steeper middle section of the mountain.

After a bowl of hot chili or a sandwich at the Base Lodge Grill, take a sleigh ride led by a mother-daughter team of horses (Princess and Queen) and the Brady family, who have been guiding sleighs for the hotel for 30 years. A wool blanket will ensure that you stay warm on your trip through the woods.

Next, grab your companions and go ice-skating amid the movie-set-perfect scenery. For more adventure, rent a snowmobile in nearby Errol and power through the trails and forests until the sun sets slowly in the gray sky.

Back at the resort, the fires ease the cold and shed soft light around the rooms. Perhaps take a nap before dressing for dinner, a three-course meal served at the table that is yours for the duration of your stay. The menu, prepared by award-winning chefs, changes every day and features dishes such as roast prime rib or oven-broiled salmon filet with fresh herbs. Desserts include white chocolate hazelnut pudding and mocha puzzle cake.

When the meal is complete, enjoy chocolate chip cookie liqueur or a glass goblet of steaming hot chocolate with whipped cream and a cherry on top. Once you've seen a movie in the resort's

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Get out on 30 kilometers of snowshoes-only trails at The Balsams resort.

theater, played a game of pool or billiards, taken in a show at the nightclub, or read all you can of your book before your eyes begin to close, head upstairs to your room.

Fall asleep after a dip in the Jacuzzi in one of the more modern rooms or cuddle under your blanket and be lulled to sleep by the melodic clanking of the heating pipes in Dixville House, the older section of the resort. Either way, you'll awaken the next morning ready for a day of lounging and pampering, or maybe even geared up enough for more hours full of activities and a trip down the Mohawk ski trail. —Kathryn LoConte

When You Go

The Balsams Grand Resort Hotel, 1000 Cold Spring Rd., Dixville Notch, NH. Rates: \$175-\$309 per person, including breakfast, dinner, and all activities (equipment rental extra). 800-255-0600, 603-255-3400. thebalsams.com